Thoughts Aren’t Facts
Find shades of gray

When we change our words, we change our thoughts. When we change our thoughts, we change our lives.

1. Sometimes our thoughts make things worse than they actually are. Our thoughts can create “our reality” – but this may not be REALITY.
   • If a teen is late for curfew — you assume there’s been an accident
   • If you’re scared of the dark — you react in fear (adrenaline)
   • If someone whispers to another person, when you enter a room — you assume it’s about you.

2. Thoughts develop a life of their own!
   • Although thoughts are only in our minds, they can be very powerful — they affect how we feel and what we do. Our thought patterns dictate the ways we perceive and explain reality and influence our behavior.

3. Being aware of our thoughts as something separate from what is actually happening can help us deal with them and the tough situations creating the thoughts.

4. The following are four negative patterns that increase production of stress hormones and may cause mental and physical damage.

Unrealistic expectations
• Being a perfectionist — holding high expectations for self and others.
  ° If life doesn’t meet expectations, we may push ourselves harder, despite signs telling us to stop or do something different
• Taking on too much. Can’t do it all.
  ° Constant doing because relaxation doesn’t feel deserved.
• Common thoughts like: “I should...I must...I have too...I need to...I always...Absolutely...You have too…”
• Thoughts filled with criticism and judgement towards self and others.
• Thoughts filled with worry, fear, frustration, self-hatred or guilt.
• Can’ts excuse you from possible failure — avoid failure, then stay in control
**Jumping to conclusions**

Tricks you into thinking if you can figure out what is going to happen, you can prepare for it.

- Reading emails at night – late to bed then tired the next day.
- Assuming the worst
- Assuming others are thinking badly of them or assuming they know something will turn out badly. Making up mental scenarios of negative situations that could occur.
- Leads to feelings of anxiety, worry, fear, sadness and defeat.
- Thoughts blow things out of proportion quickly.
  - Making a mountain out of a molehill.
- We tend to overgeneralize and see negatives as patterns of defeat.
- Emotionally reasoning based on nothing but strong feelings.

**Taking it personally**

Nothing other people do is about you – it’s because of themselves.

- “Everything is about me” — assumes that whatever is going wrong is your own fault or is aimed at self in some way.
- Blame self for things not responsible for.
  - “Everything bad happens to me.”
  - “Why me?”
  - “I always have bad luck.”
  - “Yes, but” — side-step responsibility, get control.
- Associated with feeling angry, hopeless, defeated and guilty.

**Thoughts don’t equal facts**

- Thinking lets your emotions convince you that what you are thinking is fact and then begin to judge yourself.
  - “Why didn’t I figure that out. I’m so dumb.”
  - “I’m sad so I must be depressed.”
  - “I don’t want to work on this right now so I must be a slacker.”
- Leads to feelings of hopelessness and sadness.
- Become aware of how you let your thoughts become reality without exploring different perspectives.

5. **What is self-talk?**

- We see what we are looking for.